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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ALMATY 000158

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/CACEN (JMUDGE), DRL/PHD (C. KUCHTA-HELBLING)

SENSITIVE

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KZ](#) [POLITICAL](#)

SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: ZHAKIYANOV RELEASED ON PAROLE

REF: ALMATY 23

¶11. (SBU) Summary: Jailed Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan leader Galymzhan Zhakiyanov was freed on January 14 and has returned to Almaty. He stated at a January 17 press conference that, although the terms of his parole will prevent him from holding elected or appointed public office for several more years, he intends to remain involved in politics. He expressed hope that President Nazarbayev will move forward with promised political reforms and stressed that both the opposition and the authorities have a responsibility to work for reform. Zhakiyanov offered few specifics on his own plans, saying he needed to make up for lost time by consulting with the people about their priorities. End summary.

Zhakiyanov Released, Returns to Almaty

¶12. (SBU) Jailed Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (DCK) leader Galymzhan Zhakiyanov was granted "early conditional release" on January 14, after serving just over half of his sentence for abuse of authority (reftel). According to the OSCE, approximately 30 observers attended the hearing, which was held at the Shidertay settlement colony. All were granted access to the proceedings without delay.

¶13. (U) Zhakiyanov and his wife Karlygash returned to Almaty by train on January 15, where they were greeted at the train station by a crowd of 300-600 supporters. "For a Just Kazakhstan" (FJK) leaders Zharmakhan Tuyakbay, Altynbek Sarsenbaiuly, and Bulat Abilov were among those who greeted Zhakiyanov.

First Press Conference

¶14. (SBU) In a January 17 press conference in Almaty, Zhakiyanov appeared to try to strike a constructive and open-minded tone with regard to the GOK and prospects for political reform. He announced that he would remain involved in politics. Other than to say that he still supports the DCK platform as outlined in fall 2001, including the need to decentralize power, increase the authority of Parliament, ensure freedom of speech, and reform the electoral and judicial systems, Zhakiyanov did not offer any specific proposals. He stressed that he had been cut off from the public for almost four years and therefore needed time to meet with people and discuss their priorities.

¶15. (SBU) Zhakiyanov chose his words carefully when asked about President Nazarbayev. He said that given everything that had happened, he did not retain warm feelings for Nazarbayev. On the other hand, he said did not hate the president. Zhakiyanov added that he believed Nazarbayev probably felt he was doing the right thing by prosecuting him (Zhakiyanov). Zhakiyanov expressed hope that Nazarbayev will fulfill his numerous pre-electoral promises to move forward with political reform. At one point he challenged a reporter's implication that the opposition supported reform, and the GOK was fundamentally opposed. Zhakiyanov said several times, "the main question is whether Nazarbayev is willing and able to move forward with real democratic reforms as promised." He stressed that he started from the assumption that Nazarbayev intended to honor his promises, and that both the opposition and the authorities must make reform a priority.

¶16. (U) Zhakiyanov dodged a question on the current situation of DCK, saying that he cannot tell party members what organization to support. He added that he will remain a member of FJK. He also stated that it is not relevant at the moment to discuss the creation of new political parties, as it is so difficult to register and operate them in the current environment.

¶17. (U) When asked about his views of U.S. policy on human rights in the region, Zhakiyanov responded that the U.S. is

a superpower that promotes democratic values around the world, including in this region. He said that he saw no contradiction between the USG's words and actions.

18. (U) Zhakiyanov explained that the terms of his release allow him to engage in political activity. He cannot hold any government position, whether elected or appointed, for three years after the expiration of his entire seven-year term, however. He must report his travels to a special state agency. Should he be convicted of any other administrative violations, he could be forced to complete the remaining three and a half years of his term.

Gratitude to the USG

19. (SBU) In a brief conversation with POEC chief following the press conference, Zhakiyanov expressed his sincere gratitude to the U.S. government for its unwavering support during his trial and imprisonment. He said he looks forward to meeting with Embassy and USG representatives as soon as the dust settles.

110. (SBU) Comment: Zhakiyanov's first press conference left open as many questions as it answered. He appeared alone, giving no hint as to how he will fit into the new architecture of the opposition movement that has evolved since he was jailed and DCK was legally dissolved in early 12005. He is clearly eager to get off on the right foot with the GOK, and to foster dialogue on political reform. This, however, is an approach that his colleagues in the opposition movement may not share, following the acrimonious presidential campaign. End comment.

ASQUINO